

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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S E C R E T KINSHASA 2474

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT GARBLED THRUOUT)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS MOPS CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU'S MILITARY PLANS AND US RESPONSE

REF: KINSHASA 2463

1. IN ORDER TO ASSURE BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY, WE BELIEVE MOBUTU MUST, AT A MINIMUM, HOLD THE KOLWEZI/LUBUMBASHI SECTOR AND BEGIN TO MOVE BACK INTO TERRITORY NOW HELD BY THE INVADERS. REFTEL DESCRIBES MOBUTU'S MILITARY PLANS FOR THE REINFORCEMENT OF KOLWEZI AND A COORDINATED PARA DROP INTO HOSTILE TERRITORY IN WESTERN SHABA. I HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT MOBUTU'S FORCES CAN PULL IT OFF, BUT NO DOUBT THAT HE MUST TRY. I FURTHER BELIEVE THAT IF MOBUTU SEES THAT THE FAZ CANNOT HOLD, HE WILL CALL IN MERCENARIES. ALL OF THIS FORCES A SPECIFIC DECISION ON THE SHIPMENT OF US ARMS/MUNITIONS AND A GENERAL DECISION ON OUR FUTURE POSTURE VIS-A-VIS ZAIRE.

2. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE CURRENT DECISION ON ASSISTANCE FOR ZAIRE CARRIES US ONLY AS FAR AS THE FIRST TWO PLANELOADS AND EXCLUDES ARMS/MUNITIONS, AND I FULLY APPRECIATE THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN MOVING BEYOND THAT POINT. NEVERTHELESS, THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OF ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION FOR M-16'S LOOMS AS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE

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AND MUST BE ADDRESSED NOW. THERE ARE 10,000 OF THESE WEAPONS CURRENTLY IN FAZ HANDS, AND AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES THERE WERE 2 MILLION ROUNDS IN COUNTRY. ALL FAZ COMBAT FORCES NOW IN SHABA CARRY THE M-16'S. WE ESTIMATE THAT UNDER NORMAL COMBAT CONDITIONS THE FAZ TROOPS HAVE ENOUGH AMMUNITION TO LAST ABOUT ONE WEEK. IT SEEMS INEVITABLE, THEREFORE, THAT THE BULK OF FAZ COMBAT TROOPS IN SHABA WILL SHORTLY BE IN NEED OF M-16 AMMUNITION

WHICH, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, IS AVAILABLE ONLY FROM US SOURCES.

3. I WOULD BE REMISS IN MY DUTY IF I DID NOT POINT OUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF REFUSING TO SHIP M-16 AMMO:

(A) IT WOULD UNDERMINE, PROBABLY FATAALLY, THE FAZ'S CAPABILITY TO HOLD OR TO COUNTERATTACK SINCE THE M-16 IS THE BASIC INDIVIDUAL WEAPON FOR THE FAZ.

(B) SINCE THERE IS NO WAY MOBUTU COULD REPLACE THE M-16S IN THE SHORT TIME FRAME FACING HIM, THE DECISION WOULD BE SEEN AS A WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

(C) ONCE KNOWN, IT WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY MOBUTU'S INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENEMIES THAT WE HAVE WRITTEN HIM OFF.

IN SUM, A NEGATIVE M-16 AMMO DECISION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOSS OF SHABA AND WITH IT THE BULK OF ZAIRIAN FOREIGN EXCHANGE REVENUES. THIS, IN TURN, COULD WELL PROVOKE THE DOWNFALL OF THE MOBUTU REGIME.

4. I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT I AM NOT RECOMMENDING A FAVORABLE M-16 DECISION ON THE GROUNDS THAT WE MUST KEEP MOBUTU IN POWER. IN FACT, IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT THE PROVISION OF THE AMMUNITION WILL IN ITSELF BE ENOUGH TO ALLOW FAZ TO HOLD. AND THERE IS REASON TO QUESTION WHETHER IN THE LONGER RUN MOBUTU CAN SURVIVE POLITICALLY EVEN IF HIS FORCES CAN STOP AND CONTAIN THE INVADERS. NEVERTHELESS, AND REGARDLESS OF THE FUTURE VIABILITY OF MOBUTU, I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE A MOVE WHICH COULD WELL PRECIPITATE THIS DOWNFALL.

5. MY RECOMMENDATION IS THAT WE AGREE TO IMMEDIATELY SUPPLY 2 MILLION ROUNDS (ONE WEEK'S SUPPLY) OF M-16 AMMO. AFTER THAT,  
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WE CAN LOOK AT THE QUESTION AGAIN, IF THE NEED ARISES. SECONDLY, IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THE BELGIANS' 50 CAL AMMO IS NOT INTERCHANGEABLE WITH OURS FOR USE BY THE APC'S THEN WE SHOULD AGREE TO THIS TOO. WE CAN SCRATCH THE MORTAR AMMO ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE GOZ CAN USE BELGIAN EQUIPMENT AND GET AMMO FROM THEM. RECOMMEND A NEGATIVE DECISION ON THE LAWS, AT THIS TIME.

6. AS FOR OUR LONGER RUN POSTURE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAINTAIN AND PLACE MORE STRESS ON OUR SUPPORT OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AS OPPOSED TO MOBUTU HIMSELF. THIS COULD MEAN THE FOLLOWING KINDS OF ACTIONS:

-- MAKE IT CLEAR TO MOBUTU AND TO WORLD, IF ASKED, THAT WE HAVE AGREED TO AMMO VERY RELUCTANTLY AND ONLY BECAUSE WE WOULD BE MORALLY REMISS IF WE REFUSED THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER THE MEANS TO PROTECT HIMSELF WITH THE ONLY WEAPON AVAILABLE TO HIM.

-- WITH THE FOREGOING EXCEPTION, AND DEPENDING ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, SHIFT OUR ASSISTANCE EFFORTS IN THE DIRECTION OF MORE HUMANITARIAN AID FOR LOCAL POPULATION, BUT INCLUDING RATIONS, MEDICINES AND OUR TRADITIONAL NON-LETHAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE

FOR FAZ (TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS).

-- GIVE ALL POSSIBLE EMPHASIS AND SUPPORT TO DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO STOP THE FIGHTING (AND AT SOME POINT, PERHAPS, CALL FOR NEGOTIATIONS).

-- OFFER TO LET MOBUTU USE SOME PORTION OF HIS FY 77 FMS TO BUY FROM BELGIANS AND FRENCH. IN OTHER WORDS, LET THEM GET OUT IN FRONT, IF THEY WISH.

--IF MOBUTU CALLS IN MERCENARIES, INSIST THAT NO US ARMS BE PROVIDED TO THEM.

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